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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5427  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 4648  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3041  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5414  
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5725  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7700  
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0553  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0809  
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002568

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR X0XX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. U.S.-Israel Relations

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Key stories in the media:  
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HaQaretz reported that senior American officials fear that opening a U.S. interests section in Tehran could strengthen President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and help him win the presidential elections next June.

Continuing controversy over whether or not to open a Tehran mission means the final decision will rest with the incoming Barack Obama administration. HaQaretz reported that Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns met a group of Israeli diplomats in Washington last week and told them of the argument over the interests section. Burns, who is likely to stay in his post in the Obama administration, is coordinating the changeover with Obama's people in the State Department.

Major media (banner in HaQaretz) quoted IDF Intelligence head Amos Yadlin as saying yesterday that Barack Obama's election and the world financial crisis present an opportunity to halt the Iranian nuclear drive through diplomacy. He stressed that he is not opposed to direct talks between the United States and Iran, saying that "dialogue is not appeasement." Yadlin was quoted as saying that the probability of a war between Israel and its enemies over the next year was low.

In an interview held yesterday with HaQaretz, Palestinian PM and Finance Minister Salam Fayyad called on the international community to up the pressure on Israel to suspend all construction in the settlements and implied that the PA could apply to the International Court of Justice in this regard, adopting the example of the separation fence. Israel Radio reported that Israel has allowed UNRWA to bring 33 truckloads of goods into Gaza, although UNRWA says it is not enough.

The media reported that former IDF chief of staff Moshe YaQalon announced yesterday that he would be running for the Knesset on Benjamin Netanyahu's list. The media quoted him as saying yesterday that a military option against Iran still exists.

Media reported that police have arrested four senior and 23 lesser officials at the Israel Lands Administration on charges of financial and sexual bribery. The media also reported on a possible case of double voting in 2003 by Finance Minister Roni Bar-On -Q then a simple MK.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that yesterday DM Ehud Barak told visiting British FM David Miliband during a tour of Sderot: QWe will act when the conditions are ripe and when there is a need. And we will act with force.

HaQaretz and The Jerusalem Post quoted IAEA Director Mohamed ElBaradei as saying yesterday that traces of uranium found at a Syrian site bombed by Israel last year were not sufficient evidence of nuclear activity there.

Leading media reported that an Israeli was shot and moderately wounded on a West Bank road yesterday.

Yediot and The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel will release 250 Palestinian prisoners by December. Israel Radio quoted Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat as saying that that yesterday, at his meeting with PM Olmert, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas requested the release by the Muslim Festival of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha) of Fatah/Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti, FPLP leader Ahmed Saadat, and Palestinian parliament speaker Aziz Dweik.

Media reported that during his current visit to the UK, President Shimon Peres will address both Houses of Parliament.

Israel Radio reported that the policy of New Zealand's PM-elect John Key is expected to be more Israel-friendly than that of his predecessor Helen Clark.

The Jerusalem Post reported that human rights groups told the High Court of Justice yesterday that half of the 200 foreign workers currently awaiting deportation are being expelled because they left their original employers and failed to find a new one. In 2006, the court abolished the QchainingQ of foreign workers to their employees.

Yediot reported that 75% of foreign investors in Georgia are Israelis.

Most media led with the assassination of crime kingpin YaQakov Alperon in a car bomb explosion in Tel Aviv yesterday.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: QThe chorus of people encouraging war [in Gaza] provides no reasonable alternative except political sloganeering. They had better listen carefully to the residents of the western Negev, because they know better than anyone what the truce is good for.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QIt may well be unreasonable to expect this caretaker government to solve the Gaza conundrum. It is not unreasonable to ask ministers who will not cooperate in the security cabinet to stop babbling away in public.

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in The Jerusalem Post: QGetting others to like us is important, Obama said. Fine, they will now present their bill for smiling at America.

Block Quotes:  
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1. "Stop Beating the Drums of War"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (11/18): QThose seeking to occupy Gaza should be reminded that Israel agreed to the truce because it recognized that the price of a large military operation in Gaza would be intolerably high. The Israel Defense Forces and the defense minister continue to object to such an operation, and their arguments have not changed since before the truce.... The policy breakdown is not that Israel is avoiding war in Gaza, but that it has failed to recognize the need for dialogue with a united Palestinian leadership. In the current situation between Israel and Hamas, there is no choice but to adopt the lesser of two evils and mend the shattered truce. Israel must open the border crossings and keep them open, and allow Gaza's residents to lead a normal existence. The chorus of people encouraging war provides no reasonable alternative except political sloganeering. They had better listen carefully to the residents of the western Negev, because they know better than anyone what the truce is good for.

II. "Tower of Babel"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (11/18): QPity the Hamas leadership as it tries to fathom how Israel will respond to the organization's repeated violations of the cease-fire.... Trouble is the bluster and contradictory pronouncements emanating from Israel's top echelon haven't been made to confuse the enemy -- they are sadly indicative of our disarray.... Now, nothing is more disheartening to Israel's citizenry than to witness such disunity when the country is under attack.... It may well be unreasonable to expect this caretaker government to solve the Gaza conundrum. It is not unreasonable to ask ministers who will not cooperate in the security cabinet to stop babbling away in public.

III. "Radical Regimes Rethink Obama"

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in The Jerusalem Post (11/18): QEverybody in the Middle East faces the challenge of how to deal with President Barack Obama, a decision with huge implications for the next four years. The radicals praised Obama during the campaign and some even tried to help him. On the eve of the vote, however, they reconsidered their enthusiasm .... The alternative is to welcome Obama, negotiate with him, and get concessions from an American president eager to please. Getting others to like us is important, Obama said. Fine, they will now

present their bill for smiling at America. This technique of pretending to be conciliatory and moaning, QI'm a poor misunderstood moderateQ was developed brilliantly by Yasser Arafat. Indeed, if he had not received the Nobel Prize for Peace, Arafat should have received one for acting. Even Hamas is catching on, though its performance is probably too little, too late.... The biggest dilemma is faced by the more moderate Arab states which will have the horrible experience of getting what they said they wanted. Or, to paraphrase William Shakespeare's great opening speech for QRichard IIIQ -- you won and now's the time to be discontented. Unhappy with the American presence in Iraq? QGood news,Q the Americans are leaving. Publicly proclaiming you don't see Iran's nuclear weapons drive as a threat? No worries, the United States will ease up. Angry at the previous president's Qsaber-rattlingQ? Great, Obama doesn't want ever to use force, even to protect you. Oh, it is all going to be very interesting. One can only hope that it isn't going to be very bloody.

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12. U.S.-Israel Relations:  
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Summary:  
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Former Consul-General in New York Alon Pinkas wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: Q[Senator Hillary] ClintonQs appointment [as secretary of state] will conclude the debate in Israel regarding the question whether Qwe are a first priority for the Obama administration.Q The answer is positive.

Block Quotes:  
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"The Clinton Outline"

Former Consul-General in New York Alon Pinkas wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/18): QWhat is Hillary Clinton bringing with her to the State Department? 1) Some of President ClintonQs people. (The time has come to refresh those in Israel who worry about the Clinton outlines on the Palestinian and Syrian track. They are coming back.) 2) ClintonQs approach to international relations and the need for active American intervention in conflict resolution. ClintonQs appointment will conclude the debate in Israel regarding the question whether Qwe are a first priority for the Obama administration.Q The answer is positive -Q if not Barack Obama, certainly the QObama administration.Q The appointment of Hillary Clinton -Q with Bill in the background -Q can be considered good news for Tzipi Livni Q- and much less so for Benjamin Netanyahu.

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